

PSCI 2221: Causes of War

Vanderbilt University
Fall 2016
MWF 9:10–10:00 a.m.
Commons Center 335
<http://bkenkel.com/psci2221>

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Office hours: M 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Commons Center 324

This is the revised syllabus dated October 19, 2016.

Description

War is awful. In the 20th century alone, war killed at least 136 million people.¹ Our goal in this course is to better understand the political processes that lead to all this destruction. We will try to rationalize war.

I have organized the course around a line of argument—my scholarly take on the nature and origins of war. If you come away from the course remembering only three things, let it be these.

1. War is a political act—an act of policy carried out by the government of a state.
2. To understand what wars are fought over, we must understand the nature and reason of the state.
3. To understand why states do not resolve these issues peacefully, we must understand why bargaining fails.

I don't claim that this is the final word on the causes of war. As we will see, even scholars who work within these premises disagree plenty about specific causes of war. And not all scholars accept these premises—nor should you, at least not without questioning them first.

Grading

Your grade in PSCI 2221 will be based on:

¹Milton Leitenberg, “Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century” (Occasional Paper 29, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, Cornell University, 2006).

- **Critical Response Papers (25%).** You will write two critical response papers, no more than five pages each,² throughout the semester. (An optional third paper may replace the lowest grade on the first two.) In each paper, you will choose a course reading (required or supplemental) of particular interest to you and make a critical argument about its central claims. For more details, see the handout on critical response papers.
- **Midterm Exam (15%).** We will have an in-class midterm consisting of short essay questions on October 7. *If you cannot be in class on October 7, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make alternative arrangements.*
- **Final Paper (50%).** The bulk of your grade is based on a research paper. In your final paper, you will make an original argument about the causes of war, backed by evidence from the historical record. You should be thinking about potential paper topics all semester long. As we proceed through the schedule of readings, take time to think about which of the research questions we encounter interest you the most.

There are three parts to the final paper:

- *Proposal (5%).* You will write a 1–2 page proposal summarizing (1) your research question and (2) the body of evidence you will consult to back your argument. I will not accept your final paper submission unless you have submitted a proposal and I have approved it. The proposal itself is not graded, but 5% of your grade comes from turning it (and any subsequent revisions requested) in on time. Proposals are due October 31.
- *Presentation (10%).* In the penultimate week of class, each student will deliver a brief (5–10 minute) presentation in class about his or her research design and preliminary findings.
- *Paper (35%).* The paper itself should be about 15 pages long and cannot exceed 20 pages (not including bibliography). It is due at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 16. Late papers will not be accepted.
- **Participation (10%).** This class is a seminar, and your participation is crucial for its success. I expect you not only to attend class, but also

²Page lengths quoted assume a double-spaced document with 12-point text and 1-inch margins.

to have completed the readings and prepared to discuss them. Your attendance, preparation, and engagement in class discussion will all be reflected in your participation grade.

Academic Integrity

As in all courses at Vanderbilt, your work in PSCI 2221 is governed by the Honor Code. I encourage you to discuss course material and assignments with your peers, but the written work you turn in must be solely your own.

I have no tolerance for plagiarism. If you turn in plagiarized work, you will receive a failing grade for the course and be reported to the Honor Council. Plagiarism is not just verbatim copying and pasting—representing someone else’s ideas as your own without citing the source is also a form of plagiarism. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse or a defense. For more information about what is and is not plagiarism, refer to [the Student Handbook section on the Honor System](#), particularly the section “The Honor Code Applied to Preparation of Papers.” Always remember: *when in doubt, cite.*

Special Accommodations

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me or with the [Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department](#) (2-4705) as soon as possible. Please also consult with me if you need to make audio or video recordings of lectures as part of a reasonable accommodation approved by EAD.

Books

All students must have a copy of the following books:

- Christopher Clark, [The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914](#). HarperCollins, 2013.

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*. Oxford University Press, 1976.
- R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State: The Theory of International Politics*. University of Michigan Press, 2007.

Schedule

The schedule of readings is tentative and is subject to change. I will inform you at least a week in advance of any changes to the required readings.

Links to all journal articles are available in the syllabus on the course website, <http://bkenkel.com/psci2221/syllabus.html>. Scans of book chapters will be made available through Blackboard under the “Course Content” heading.

August 24–26: War As a Political Act

- Carl von Clausewitz, “What Is War?”, book 1, chap. 1 in *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1989).
- John Keegan, “War in Human History,” chap. 1 in *A History of Warfare* (Vintage, 1993).

August 29–31: Two Millenia of Warfare in Two Days

Class cancelled Friday, September 2.

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*, entire book. (It’s short.)
- Supplemental (and highly recommended):
 - Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (Free Press, 1973).
 - David Kaiser, *Politics and War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler* (Harvard University Press, 1990).
 - Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (Vintage, 1989).
 - William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (University of Chicago Press, 1984).

September 5–9: The Causes of War (If Only It Were That Simple)

- R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State*, chap. 1: “The Theory of International Politics.” (Chap. 3–4 also recommended, but not required.)
- James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379–414.
- Supplemental:
 - James D. Fearon, “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science,” *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 169–195.
 - Robert Powell, “Bargaining Theory and International Conflict,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002): 1–30.
 - David A. Lake, “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War,” *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010/11): 7–52.

September 12–14: War Made the State and the State Made War

Class cancelled Friday, September 16.

- John H. Herz, “Rise and Demise of the Territorial State,” *World Politics* 9, no. 4 (1957): 473–493.
- Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” chap. 5 in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State*, chap. 2: “Reason of State.”
- Supplemental:
 - Richard Bean, “War and the Birth of the Nation State,” *Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 1 (1973): 203–221.

September 19–21: Nationalism

Class cancelled Friday, September 23.

- R.R. Palmer, “Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War,” chap. 4 in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1986).
- V.P. Gagnon, Jr., “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994/95): 130–166.
- Supplemental:
 - Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, “Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 5–40.
 - Mlada Bukovansky, “The Altered State and the State of Nature: The French Revolution and International Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1999): 197–216.

September 26–30: A Matter of Land

First critical response paper due in class Wednesday, September 28.

- Barbara F. Walter, “Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 4 (2003): 137–153.
- Douglas M. Gibler, “Outside-In: The Effects of External Threat on State Centralization,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 4 (2010): 519–542.
- Supplemental:
 - Mark W. Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 215–250.
 - Beth A. Simmons, “Rules over Real Estate: Trade, Territorial Conflict, and International Borders as Institution,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 6 (2005): 823–848.
 - Jordan Branch, “Mapping the Sovereign State: Technology, Authority, and Systemic Change,” *International Organization* 65, no. 1 (2011): 1–36.
 - David B. Carter and H.E. Goemans, “The Making of the Territorial

Order: New Borders and the Emergence of Interstate Conflict,” *International Organization* 65, no. 2 (2011): 275–309.

October 3–5: The Spoils of the Global Economy

- Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O’Rourke, “World Trade 1650–1780: The Age of Mercantilism,” chap. 5 in *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millenium* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

October 7: Midterm Exam

October 10–12: Trade and War

No class Friday, October 14 due to fall break.

- Joanne Gowa and Edward D. Mansfield, “Power Politics and International Trade,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 2 (1993): 408–420.
- Katherine Barbieri, “Economic Interdependence: A Path to Peace or a Source of Interstate Conflict?” *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 1 (1996): 29–49.
- Supplemental:
 - Katherine Barbieri and Jack S. Levy, “Sleeping with the Enemy: The Impact of War on Trade,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 4 (1999): 463–479.
 - J. Tyson Chatagnier and Kerim Can Kavakli, “From Economic Competition to Military Combat: Export Similarity and International Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2015).

October 24–28: Democracy, Capital, and War

- David A. Lake, “Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War,” *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (1992): 24–37.

- Jonathan D. Caverley, “Cost Distribution and Aggressive Grand Strategy,” chap. 2 in *Democratic Militarism: Voting, Wealth, and War* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Supplemental:
 - Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, “Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 624–638.
 - Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., “An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace,” *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (1999): 791–807.
 - Erik Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166–191.
 - Matthew O. Jackson and Massimo Morelli, “Political Bias and War,” *American Economic Review* 97, no. 4 (2007): 1353–1373.

October 31–November 4: War Doesn’t Kill People; Leaders Start Wars That Kill People

Final paper proposal due in class Monday, October 31.

- Giacomo Chiozza and H.E. Goemans, “Peace through Insecurity: Tenure and International Conflict” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 4 (2003): 443–467.
- Jessica L. Weeks, “Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 326–347.
- Supplemental:
 - James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577–592.
 - George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, “Conflict, Agency, and Gambling for Resurrection: The Principal-Agent Problem Goes to War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 2 (1994): 362–380.

- Kenneth A. Schultz, “Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises,” *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 4 (1998): 829–844.

November 7–11: The Great War

Second critical response paper due in class Friday, November 11.

- Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, chap. 1–6.
- Supplemental:
 - Paul M. Kennedy, “The First World War and the International Power System,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 7–40.
 - Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58–107.
 - Gordon A. Craig, “The Army and Foreign Policy, 1871–1914,” chap. 7 in *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1955).
 - Imanuel Geiss, “The Outbreak of the First World War and German War Aims,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 3 (1966): 75–91.
 - Jack Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108–146.
 - David Stevenson, “Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (1997): 125–161.

November 14–18: The Great War, continued

- Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, chap. 7–12.
- Supplemental:
 - Michael Howard, “Men Against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 41–57.
 - Marc Trachtenberg, “The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914,” *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990/91): 120–150.

- Hew Strachan, “First World War,” chap. 9 in *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (Routledge, 1983).

November 28–December 2: Student Presentations

Optional bonus WW1 critical response paper due in class Friday, December 2.

December 5–7: Is War Over?

- R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State*, chap. 6: “A World of Commonwealths.”
- Watch Steven Pinker’s TED talk, “[The Surprising Decline in Violence.](#)”
- Bear Braumoeller, “[Is War Disappearing?](#)” (working paper, 2013).

Final paper due at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 16.